THE Reconstructionist

Volume XI. April 6, 1945 Nisan 23, 5705 No. 4

EDITORIALS
- *President Roosevelt's Statement and Zionist Policy*
- *The Synagogue and Labor*
- *Jewish Education for Every Jewish Child*

THE CHAPLAIN AND THE RABBI
By Morris Adler

IN SEARCH OF THE PERMANENT
By Alexander A. Steinbach

HOW TO MAKE HEBREW STUDY RELEVANT
By Harry Elkin

BOOK NOTES *By Joseph Sarachek*

REALITIES AND VALUES

CORRESPONDENCE

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues, starting in October, by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y. Subscription $2.00 per year; 10c per copy; foreign 25c extra; membership in the Foundation, $5.00 per year, including subscription to *The Reconstructionist.* Reentered as second class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman: Mordecai M. Kaplan

Associate Chairman: Ira Eisenstein

Managing Editor: Eugene Kohn

Associate Editors: Israel S. Chipkin, Samuel Dinin, Judith K. Eisenstein, Theodore Friedman, Theodore H. Gaster, Jacob S. Golub, Bernard Heller, Philip Houtz, Samuel C. Kohs, Milton R. Konvitz, Myer S. Kripke, Milton Steinberg, Max Wiener.

Contributing Editors: Michael Alper, Nathan A. Barack, Shlomo Bardin, Morton M. Berman, Philip S. Bernstein, Asher Block, Samuel M. Blumenfield, Ben-Zion Bokser, William J. Boxerman, Mortimer J. Cohen, Miriam R. Ephraim, Harry Essrig, Emanuel Gamoran, Judah I. Goldin, Solomon Goldman, Robert Gordis, Emanuel Green, Max Kadushin, Louis M. Levitsky, Theodore N. Lewis, Joshua Loth Liebman, I. D. Minzberg, Edward T. Sandrow, Simon Shetzer, Joshua Trachtenberg, Leo Trepp, Jacob J. Weinstein.

Secretary: Hannah L. Goldberg

AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

MORRIS ADLER is a chaplain in the army of the United States.

HARRY ELKIN is assistant executive director of the Y.M.-Y.W.H.A., Trenton, N. J.

ALEXANDER A. STEINBACH is a chaplain in the army of the United States.

DR JOSEPH SARACHEK, Rabbi of Bay Ridge Jewish Center, Brooklyn, is the author of "The Doctrine of the Messiah in Jewish Literature," "Faith and Reason," "The Conflict Over the Rationalism of Maimonides" and a biography of Don Isaac Abravanel.

WITH ALL DUE MODESTY

From a U. S. Army Officer:

I have just returned from 31 missions over Germany to discover your magazine. Had I previously known of its existence, I would have indeed profited a lot more than I have already done during my stay in the army.

From a Private in the U. S. Army:

I do enjoy the magazine and its many fine articles.

RESERVE MONDAY EVENING, MAY FOURTEENTH

for

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

of

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Hotel Commodore, New York, 7:00 P.M.

$25.00 per person

No solicitation of funds at the dinner.

Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan and Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr will be the principal speakers.

HELP CELEBRATE THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST'S TENTH BIRTHDAY!

The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc.

15 W. 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y.

Please reserve ..... seats for the Tenth Anniversary Dinner.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

THE

Reconstructionist

Volume XI. April 6, 1945 Nisan 23, 5705 No. 4

EDITORIALS

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S STATEMENT AND ZIONIST POLICY

AMERICAN Jews should feel reassured that President Roosevelt is a friend of the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, by the brief statement issued on March 16th, reaffirming his much-acclaimed statement of last October to the convention of the Zionist Organization of America.

But "reassured" does not mean "satisfied," and American Jews are far from satisfied. In this they are justified, for the President has done nothing save to renew the promise made before the election last fall, a promise to aid in achieving the end toward which Jews have been working. Zionists now feel that the time for statements and promises has passed, and the time for practical steps has long since arrived. We fully appreciate the position in which the President finds himself; yet we know that decisions on Palestine cannot wait.

It is no secret that Zionists were profoundly disturbed at the extempore remark on the "Jewish problem" which the President injected into his report to Congress on the Yalta conference, in the course of his discussion of the meeting with Ibn Saud. It is even clearer that there is no cause for rejoicing in Churchill's statement that the question of Palestine will not be given definitive answer till after the war. Zionists are, above all, disturbed by the fact that the White Paper policy stands, and that, under its terms, Jewish immigration to Palestine would now come to an end for all time.

In the face of the unparalleled butchery of our people in Europe; in the face of the advances of the armies of liberation and the present possibilities of removing surviving Jews to Palestine; in the face of the fact that far-reaching decisions have been made involving issues other than organization for security, as in the case of the Polish boundary dispute; and in the face of the unequivocal terms of international agreements on Jewish Palestine which, according to Churchill himself, are now being violated by the White Paper; it is shocking that those who make the decisions on the future of the world should do nothing to satisfy the urgent needs and just claims of the Jewish people, but issue promises. Perhaps more is being done than has been disclosed. If such is the case, however, Jewish leaders should be consulted. In decisions affecting our future as a

people, we must not be confronted with *faits accomplis.*

We, therefore, state again that we applaud and support the action of the American Zionist Emergency Council and the American Jewish Conference in their effort to secure Jewish representation at the forthcoming United Nations Conference in San Francisco. Arab nations hitherto opportunistically and cynically neutral have declared war on the Axis in time to reserve seats at the conference table. Surely Jews, who have been the first and most tragic victims of Nazi brutality and early and faithful supporters of the United Nations, have a right to be heard on the question of the Jewish Commonwealth, with which the entire future of our people is intimately connected. Let no avenue of appeal to public and government opinion be disregarded. Let no effort be spared to voice the demand of Jews to participate in decisions that will affect and may determine their future.

The course of action for Jews in all this is straight and clear. We must not be confused nor be diverted from our main task by the rumors on Palestine which have been circulated in recent weeks. Feelers are sent out, and then denied, on an Arab proposal for continuation of Jewish immigration for a limited period of five years. More feelers are sent out on an Arab proposal to allow Jewish immigration to the extent of reaching equality of numbers with the Moslem Arab population of Palestine, leaving the balance of power with Christian Arabs; the authenticity of this proposal too is promptly denied. We may be sure that there will be more of these diversionary tactics; and we will not be far wrong in assuming that their point of origin is in the British Colonial Office. In all of this, we can be faithful to our duties only if we refuse to be hoodwinked, only if we insist on the fulfilment in letter and spirit of the international obligation to establish the Jewish National Home in Palestine. This means the opportunity to establish the Jewish Commonwealth, which is essential both to the survival of Jews and the survival of Judaism. Our demand is for a Jewish Commonwealth; nothing less is just; nothing less is acceptable.

THE SYNAGOGUE AND LABOR

THE Committee on Synagogue and Labor, of the Synagogue Council of America, has submitted an interim report on its work. The report contains a six-point program of objectives, suggestions for specific projects and an account of the committee's activities to date.

It is to the credit of the Synagogue Council that it is seeking a solution of the urgent problem of the attitude of organized labor to the synagogue. In past eras, the synagogue suffered losses, at times, through assimilation and apostasy among the upper classes. Many of the wealthy, having the opportunity and ambition to mingle with Gentile society, found loyalty to Jewish tradition a handicap, and deserted. But the synagogue could always, before modern times, depend on the loyalty and devotion of the Jewish working population. In our day, this is no longer true. For some reason, great numbers of Jewish laborers have lost interest in organized Jewish religion.

That state of affairs is not a wholesome one. From the point of view of the Synagogue, it is a threat, if not to its very existence, at least to its prestige and influence. And from the point of view of Labor, it means that the efforts of Jews in employment to secure better living conditons is deprived of that moral support which it might receive from the Jewish community if these efforts were recog-

nized as having the sanction of the religious conscience of Israel.

The Synagogue Council is, therefore, to be praised for having put this problem on its agenda. Nevertheless, at the risk of being charged with inconsistency, we would caution the Synagogue Council against precipitate action. The impression made by the interim report of the committee is one of a premature attempt at action without sufficient weighing of the relevant facts of the situation and their implications. *Of course,* the Synagogue would like to see its empty seats filled by new devotees drawn from the ranks of organized Labor. *Of course,* organized Labor would like to find in the Synagogue an ally in its struggle against predatory capitalistic interests. But if this rapprochement is so desirable, how is it that it has not happened? How is it that the workers do not seem inclined to worship in our synagogues? How is that Jewish synagogues have not made the same efforts to support organized Labor's struggles for better opportunities for living that it has made, let us say, to support Jewish philanthropic endeavors? Without a previous exploration of these problems, the *wish* of organized Religion and organized Labor to cooperate will not evoke the *will* to do so, for both parties will want to unite only *on their own terms.*

An examination of the six-point program of objectives contained in the report reveals how little progress has been made in investigating the causes of that breach which the Council desires to heal. The Committee seems to be attempting a cure without an adequate diagnosis. This is its program:

1. The Synagogue and Jewish Labor should find common ground and strive for mutual regard, cooperaton and active collaboration.

2. There should be a better understanding of the common objectives and aspirations of organized Religion and organized Labor.

3. The activities of organized Religion and organized Labor should be coordinated in joint efforts to protect and increase economic, social and political democracy.

4. Steps should be taken to neutralize the impression, wherever found, that synagogues are "class" institutions and that they represent a reactionary viewpoint in regard to economic and social problems.

5. Synagogues should "meet men where most of their time is occupied—in the midst of their work."

6. Jewish Labor and the Synagogue should find common ground with churches, especially in the field of cooperation between labor and religion.

It requires no penetrating analysis to perceive that points 1, 2 and 3 are really one point. The effort "to protect and increase economic, social and political democracy" *is* the common objective and aspiration of the Synagogue and organized Labor. The pursuit of that objective involves the "better understanding" asked for in point 2 and there is then no need to tell us, in point 1, that we should find common ground; we have found common ground, our common stake in democracy and our determination to make democracy an essential element in our religious faith.

Point 4 illustrates the crux of the whole problem. It seeks to "neutralize the impression that synagogues are 'class' institutions." But is this impression a mere figment of the imagination or has it a foundation in fact? Is our task that of exorcising an hallucination or of remedying a real evil? Is it not a fact that membership dues are so high—and necessarily so if congregations are to have budgets adequate to the discharge of their functions—that most Jewish workers cannot

afford to become members? Moreover, the problem of affiliation is not merely one of participating in meetings; participation in services is at least equally involved. Can the Jewish worker afford to absent himself from his place of work on the Sabbath morning to attend services, as many businessmen do?

Point 4 completely overlooks the fact that the alienation of labor from the synagogue did not just happen. It is one of the concomitants of the industrial revolution, and a similar alienation of Labor from the churches has occurred in other religions. But the situation is aggravated in the case of Judaism because of the status of the Jews as a minority group. The Jewish worker finds his time, interest and energies, when not actually at work, preempted by his struggle for a livelihood. He has little leisure and few resources left for any of the multitudinous Jewish communal interests not directly associated with that struggle. As he shares the common effort at the improvement of his economic conditions with other non-Jewish organized workers, he looks for guidance in these efforts to other than Jewish traditional sources. He subscribes to ideological doctrines, such as socialism or secular nationalism, which, though not necessarily antagonistic to the Torah, are not directly derived from it. Jewish tradition thus tends to lose its relevance to his main interest. And when he often sees the very men who in daily life try to exploit him occupying important positions in the synagogue, is it a wonder that he considers the synagogue a "class" institution?

As long as synagogues are private corporations making their own terms for admission to membership and are not responsible to any all-inclusive Jewish community, they will give the impression of being "class institutions" because they will be such in reality. Only when the Synagogue is communalized and the community assumes responsibility for affording to all Jews the opportunity for religious self-expression in *their own way,* will the Synagogue as an institution become the *keneset yisrael,* the religious community of Israel. Only then will the Jewish worker feel that the Synagogue is his own institution.

The other points of the committee's report are acceptable and need not be discussed here, because they are irrelevant to the thought we wish to emphasize, the need for working out a rationale for improved relations between the synagogue and labor.

We stress the inadequacy of what has so far been accomplished not to discourage the Committee on Labor and the Synagogue, but rather to spare it the disillusionment which inevitably results from over-simplifying a complex problem. Difficulties must be clearly envisaged and boldly confronted. Only then can they be overcome.

JEWISH EDUCATION FOR EVERY JEWISH CHILD

GREAT interest attaches to the recent report of a novel community experiment undertaken in the last two years by the Bureau of Jewish Education in Buffalo, N. Y. Buffalo, like other Jewish communities of its size, has its congregational schools and its communal Talmud Torah. It has its weekday schools, its Sunday schools and the beginnings of a Yeshivah. It has its Orthodox, its Conservative, its Reform and its Yiddish labor groupings. A large percentage of the Jews of Buffalo identify themselves with Jewish community life through membership in an association belonging to one of these groups or through contributions to the Federation. In more recent years, the Buffalo Bureau of Jewish Education undertook a wider community program to make possible a Jew-

ish education for every Jewish child in the community, leaving the selection of the school to the parent. The results of this undertaking to date point to increased enrollment and to longer retention of pupils.

The novel features of this endeavor are three. First is the fact that all congregations and other agencies engaged in Jewish education have united in an over-all Jewish community school board of which the Bureau is the executive and educational arm. Second is the fact that membership dues have been substituted for tuition fee charges by all congregations or other school organizations. And third is the fact that the Bureau has undertaken to pay a minimum reduced tuition fee for those parents from whom these congregations or organizations have failed to obtain membership dues.

How does this plan work? The Bureau and its cooperating agencies undertake a community pupil-enrollment campaign. Parents are informed that they can enroll their children in any school they choose. Pupils are admitted by these schools without charge. Congregations and other school organizations are permitted to solicit parent membership through the mails. Where a parent fails to enroll as a member, the Bureau is notified and it pays the reduced tuition fee. Federation, which supplies the funds to the Bureau then steps in and adds parents' names to its prospective contributor lists. These parents are solicited by Federation at the same time and in the same manner as other contributors. Poor parents are, of course, properly exempted from financial burdens they cannot carry. Schools, congregations and Federation, all seem to have benefited from the increased pupil enrollment and increased membership.

These results have been made possible only because the congregations and Federation have assumed a community approach to the problem of Jewish education. Congregational leaders who are active in Federation have discovered that community interests do not conflict with congregational interests. Quite the contrary is discovered to be true, that these interests are interdependent. Federation leaders have discovered that responsibility for children's education belongs to the entire community. They agree that no child should be deprived of his rightful privilege as a Jew, because his parents are indifferent or cannot afford to give him a good Jewish education. Both Federation and congregational leaders have begun to realize that a good, continuing Jewish education cannot be provided by a congregation through its own isolated efforts. The raising of educational standards, improvement of methods, the conduct of higher education and teachers' training can best be undertaken by the community as a whole.

By substituting membership dues for the customary tuition fees, the Buffalo Jewish community has not abandoned the traditional parental duty of *s'khar limmud*. On the contrary, it has added to this personal obligation a communal responsibility. The parent's obligation to his child is not fully and adequately discharged unless he fulfills, at the same time, his responsiblity to the community. The community, on the other hand, cannot expect the parent properly to discharge his obligations unless, in return, it assumes its full share of responsiblity for *all* the children who belong to it.

REALITIES AND VALUES

The Chicago College of Jewish Studies, of which Dr. Samuel Blumenfield is dean, is this year celebrating the completion of twenty years of service to the community. It has, for the last two decades, helped to impart through its curriculum the values that inhere in Judaism as a civilization and

to cast light on the problems which must be solved if Jewish life is to take root and thrive in the American environment. The program and activities of the College reflect the spirit of Reconstructionism, the philosophy of Jewish life to which its dean and many members of its faculty stand committed. We congratulate them and hope that, in the years to come, the College will be given every opportunity to expand its program and extend its influence.

▼

BESIDES ITS STUDY OF THE relations of the Synagogue to the labor movement, (on which we comment editorially in this issue), the Synagogue Council, in collaboration with the Jewish Welfare Board, has initiated a study on the relations of the Synagogue to the Jewish Community Center. The Synagogue a few decades ago was not at all interested in the so-called secular aspects of Jewish life. The Jewish Community Center at that time—or its equivalent, the YMHA—was not interested in the specifically religious aspects of Judaism. But the inability of Jewish religion to function when abstracted from the social and cultural interests of the Jewish people, and the inadequacy of Jewish social and cultural activity with religion omitted have made themselves evident. Hence the sharp line of demarcation between the functions of the Synagogue and of the Community Center has been blurred. This, however, should not lead to quarrelsome competitiveness between the two types of institution. The market for Jewish religion has not reached the saturation point. Both institutions can help supply it, and it is well that they are seeking methods of collaboration.

▼

SHALL A JEW OR AN ARAB BE mayor of Jerusalem? The Jews are a majority, but the Arabs — on what grounds we know not — claim the mayoralty of Jerusalem as their special prerogative. The Palestine government recently proposed a "compromise" according to which the mayoralty would rotate, a Moslem, a Jew and Christian holding the office on successive years. Although this would mean that Jerusalem would be under an Arab mayor two thirds of the time, for most Christians of Jerusalem are Arabs, the Arab leaders have organized a strike in protest against the ruling. All of which goes to show how futile is the attempt to whittle down Jewish claims to a Commonwealth in Palestine in order to meet the intransigence of a people who would rule or ruin, or, more probably rule and ruin.

▼

MAY A NEWSPAPER REFUSE AN advertisement that implies discrimination on racial or religious grounds?That question was recently decided in the affirmative by the Supreme Court of New York State. The question came up in a suit against the New York *Times* which rejected an advertisement of a resort because it contained the words "selected clientele." It is good for those interested in the fight against unjust social and economic discrimination to know that, if they see advertisements of this kind in a newspaper, it is not because the newspaper *has to print* them. This should make it easier for them to urge papers to follow the good example of the New York *Times* in not accepting discriminatory advertisements.

▼

THE ANGLO-JEWISH ASSOCIAtion has accepted an invitation from the American Jewish Committee to send a delegation to the United States for consultation on post-war Jewish problems. The American Jewish Committee has always opposed the World Jewish Congress on the ground that American Jews have only religious interests in common with

(Continued on Page 24)

The Chaplain and the Rabbi

By MORRIS ADLER

Contrasting Tasks of Rabbi and Chaplain

THE question, "when is a rabbi not a rabbi?" can in a sense be correctly answered with "when he is a chaplain." The term "rabbi" is traditionally associated with scholarship and a life of academic detachment and piety. It is a word that is most at home and is best understood in the context of a *bet-midrash.* We think of a *hevra shass,* of *she-elot uteshuvot* and of long hours spent in Talmudic study. In the army, however, the chaplain lives and has to function in an atmosphere far removed from any cloistered retreat of learning. Serenity, meditation, research are qualities and activities conspicuously absent in army life, for the chief concern and emphasis here is upon practical and immediate matters. The supreme test of effectiveness, according to army standards, is the result in the terms of the concrete and measurable. This practicality fills and informs the whole army environment.

In addition the army requires of the men in uniform that they follow a rigid and demanding regimen. In their leisure hours they frequently seek such intense and explosive distractions as will compensate them for the monotonous and exacting grind of their daily existence. The rabbi as scholar and as teacher of eternal truths is, therefore, at a disadvantage. The duties which the word "rabbi" suggests by its etymology are most difficult to carry out under the conditions that prevail in the army. The chaplains who have succeeded in establishing classes and in effecting some type of educational program will, upon analysis, find that a great variety of motives, in addition to, or most frequently in place of, the desire for learning, combined to bring the soldiers together. Nor are the results attained of such a nature as to belie the foregoing analysis of the environment in which the chaplain works. Never again in his career should the rabbi permit himself to drift as far from the realm of books and ideas.

The question, "when is a rabbi, most emphatically a rabbi?", can, paradoxically enough, also be answered correctly by the statement, "when he is a chaplain." If the rabbi is to serve best in the setting of modern conditions he must be more than a *talmid hakham;* he must be pastor, counsellor, guide, friend, symbol and example. Academic detachment should be replaced by psychological attachment; formality and remoteness must give way to proximity and warmth. In a former age, when learning and respect for learning prevailed, the rabbi, by virtue of his scholarship, was close to his people and to the world of sentiments, ideas and values which they inhabited.

The chaplaincy has enabled rabbis to draw closer to the immediacies and intimacies of the individual Jew's life. Rabbis have for too long been preoccupied with ideas or with Jewish institutions. We are so organized, or rather overorganized, in many Jewish communities in America, that the rabbi, who is often at the point where the cross fire of our organized competitiveness is strongest, begins to think of Jewish life solely in terms of agencies and institutions. Jewish life is exhausted by a catalogue which includes the Synagogue, the Zionist Organization, the Welfare Federation, the Jewish Center, Hadassah, Jewish Workers' Alliance and *landsmanschaften.* Rabbis are too likely to think of Jews *en masse,* at meetings, at a service, as delegates to a convention or as members of a board or

committee. The individual Jew is lost in the mass. Watching the parade of organizations we are likely to get an exaggerated view of Jewish strength, forgetting that many organizations, if not most, represent a façade rather than a structure.

Unoccupied Areas in Jewish Life

In the army the chaplain approaches and meets the individual Jew directly, without the mediation of agency, educational organization, or membership fees. Early in his career as chaplain, the rabbi makes several discovereis which, though vaguely suspected by him previously, had never before confronted him as authoritatively and in so vividly challenging a manner.

He discovers, for one thing, that the collective ministrations of rabbis and other professional workers have reached but a segment of American Jewry. In the army one soon learns that the high-sounding generalizations which are often expressed from pulpit and rostrum that "American Jewry stands united on this" or that "American Jewry will not tolerate that" are unwarranted and presumptuous affirmations since the speaker is really referring to the small portion of our Jewish population with which he is acquainted. The first impression to make an impact on the chaplain is that all our organizations reach but a pathetically minute section of American Jewry. Most Jews in the land fall through the interstices of our communal structure or else their membership is of such a formal and passive character as to entail no significant identification with the purposes of our communal effort.

There are immense areas in Jewish life that are unoccupied by organized activity and influence. The largest national Jewish organizations, boasting of the greatest membership rolls in Jewry, are utterly unknown to multitudes of our people and leave them untouched. The American Jewish Conference, around which a whole literature has already sprung up, is an unfamiliar phenomenon to seven out of ten Jewish soldiers to whom I have spoken, and this despite the elaborate and well-publicized elections carried on in hundreds of local communities. The Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press, the renaissance of Hebrew, the problem and idea of Zion do not impinge, in even a casual manner, upon tens and hundreds of thousands. The issues we discuss so heatedly and interminably at our conferences and conventions—issues like Jewish education, postwar rehabilitation, reform or reconstruction of Jewish tradition and practice, community organization — are not of concern to unattached Jews, whose number is legion.

Jewish life in this country seems weightier at its periphery than at its center. The unaffiliated include mechanics and small shopkeepers, intellectuals, salesmen, technicians, engineers, doctors, aspiring artists and writers, dentists and teachers. The same day brought to my office a Wac and an enlisted man, both from large populated Eastern cities, impelled by curiosity to gaze upon the first rabbi whom they had ever met. The most widespread form of contact these marginal Jews have with our group, apart from their awareness of anti-Semitism, is a vestigial residue of one or more religious observances or habits.

The chaplain sensitive to the implications of his new experiences can never again smugly confine himself to the fragmentary and unrepresentative grouping of Jews embraced by his own congregation. No party or division or sect must again be identified as *kelal yisrael.* The chaplain has glimpsed a collective of his people larger than that which organized Jewish life has ever brought into the ken of his knowledge or influence. We have been restricted in our ministrations to the point of a veritable isolationism from impor-

tant numbers of Jews. All agencies and institutions have failed in reaching out to the masses of Israel. *We must break the stranglehold which parties of all kinds have upon our attention and concern.*

Religious and Cultural Illiteracy

Another discovery soon strikes the rabbi in the armed forces a cruel blow in a most sensitive spot. The chaplain is not in uniform long before he is confronted by the total religious and cultural illiteracy of the average Jew. Each of us who is professionally engaged in Jewish work has, at one time or another, bemoaned the paucity of Jewish knowledge. Rabbis in particular have frequently and eloquently exhorted their audiences to learn and know the elements of our history and heritage. Periodically have we waged campaigns to gain students for our religious schools and our adult education institutes. We have even prided ourselves upon our realistic appraisal of the weaknesses of Jewish life in this country and the prevailing low cultural standards. Yet I doubt if even the most realistic among us has fully appreciated the extent and depth of the widespread, militant, boundless ignorance of matters Jewish which characterizes large sections of Jewry. I have seen boys from Williamsburg, Bronx, Manhattan—these Jerusalems of American Jewry, with their institutions, synagogues, talmud torahs and yeshivahs—lacking both Jewish information and the most elementary sort of rationale of Jewish living.

The chaplain now sees the immediacy of the challenge more vividly than ever before. The agencies, institutions and the whole pattern of our organized activity must inevitably *fall of their own sheer weight* for want of individuals who are intelligent and informed about their Jewish responsibilities and traditions. Lacking an informed laity, we would be placing the whole burden of Jewish survival either upon the prejudice of the non-Jew or, at best, upon the mere physical aggregation of Jews. A community cannot be developed or maintained without an inner cohesiveness and consciousness.

There is one comforting element in the picture as I see it, which saves it from being unredeemedly black. These Jewish illiterates of whom we speak are not lost souls. They are not rebels or heretics, for the deliberate act of repudiation requires a degree of interest and zeal far in excess of that possessed by them. They are Jews to whom Judaism has not been presented. They are Israelites of a pre-Sinaitic era. It is not that they have turned their backs upon Judaism but that they have never faced it. We do not have to overcome a bitter opposition and rejection. Culturally, we are presented with a *tabula rasa*. Despite their ignorance, a vague yet positive pride in Jewishness is present. Many Jews, despite ignorance, are not moved by any sickly escapism or self-humiliating complexes. They are people who have not been adequately stimulated and challenged to see the relevancy of their Jewishness to their life.

The chaplain will return to civilian life with a new sense of the primacy of Jewish education for both child and adult. The campaigns, the sermons, the public conferences and demonstrations, however spectacular, will have to give precedence to the prosaic and sometimes tedious work of education. We shall demand of every project that it contribute to the elevation of cultural standards, and that, whatever its immediate objective, it serve to educate and inform. We shall be more hesitant to yield to the so-called men of affairs in our communities who constantly remind us, "You must be practical rabbi; —this is no time for education; this is a time for action." *No defamation of Israel by its enemies is as dangerous and as humiliating as the unintended defamation of*

our tradition through ignorance and indifference, by Jews themselves.

The Need for Personal Ministrations by the Rabbi

The third discovery which the chaplain makes pertains to his own work and office. His resumption of his rabbinic duties after the war will be marked by a broadened, if not new, understanding of the scope of his functions. He will no longer regard himself exclusively a communal leader, a teacher, upholder and expounder of religious views and values. The study of the chaplain in the Army becomes, in many instances, a confessional where men reveal their inner uncertainties, inferiorities and difficulties.

The tremendous number of mentally and emotionally maladjusted which has been uncovered in the service is evidence, if such be needed, of the presence, in the civilian population, of a large army of uneasy and disturbed minds. A crisis, even one as violent and as upsetting as a combat experience does not create inner weakness. It betrays and highlights previously existing psychic disorders. Maladjustment occurs when there is a disproportion between the inner resources of an individual and the pressures and demands of external circumstances. Modern life with its complexities and tensions proves too much for many men. When to the injuries which the tempo and weight of contemporary life inflict upon the ego and nervous system we add the unique mental conflicts and sense of insecurity to which being a Jew exposes one, we have a problem that cannot be overlooked.

In the case of many Jews the obstacles, impacts and psychic pin-pricks involved in being members of the world's most conspicuous minority are neither resolved nor overcome for lack of a wholesome Jewish rationale and perspective. We have a rather large middle group whose anxieties are not intense enough to impel them to seek out the services of a psychiatrist and are not mild enough to be mastered through self-healing and adjustment. The therapeutic value of a positive viewpoint, a balanced outlook and the personal sympathetic interest of an official representative of the Jewish community cannot be overestimated.

These aids however cannot be administered in the assembly room or at public functions. *What is needed is individualized contact and conference.* The rabbi entering the circle of a family, serving as consultant in his study, inducting people in the practice of private prayer, guiding the initiation of the individual into Jewish practice and experience can bring about great psychological healing and stabilization. The chaplain is determined that, when he will return to the civilian community, he will be more than a voice, he is resolved to serve his people as a personal influence.

Many rabbis formerly looked with disdain upon pastoral duties and have even boasted that they do not include such activities in their program at all. At rabbinic conferences, rabbis often joshed one another about visiting the parishioner who was down with a cold, and cultivating the bedside manner to impress the good ladies of the Sisterhood. Yet in the army we have seen boys who were soon to go out and do heroic things in battle desperately in need of the pat on the back, the comforting word, the little manifestations of friendship by the chaplain. We will be coming back with a healthy awareness of the value of personal contact and ministration. We will drop the false standard, too often in vogue, of assessing our effectiveness solely by the numbers attending our services and the impression made by our sermon. The education of rabbis should embrace training in psychology and elementary principles of psychiatry. Synagogues should be in-

fluenced to look for such abilities and qualities in their rabbi as would enable him to be a good practicing spiritual and mental hygienist. Perhaps larger congregations should engage two or more rabbis and divide between them public duties, preaching and pastoral work. We shall above all need more rabbis. Dr. Finkelstein has pointed out that the ratio of rabbis to the Jewish population in America is far below that of the clergy to the laity in most of the religious denominations.

To sum up, the typical experiences of chaplains indicate definitely the trends for them to follow when they return as rabbis to their civilian communities. For their contacts with Jews from every walk of life and every shading of background have thrown into high relief for them the basic failings and therefore the essential needs of post-war American Jewish life. (1) They will have to recognize that, for all the vaunted organizational skill of the modern rabbi, unnumbered masses of Jews live beyond the boundaries of their organized programs and are not touched by them. (2) The polar remoteness of Jews from the central interests of Jewish tradition and knowledge constitutes the major problem in American Jewish life, and all communal forces must be mobilized to deal with it. (3) Rabbis must so minister to their people as to help them individually to lead balanced, wholesome and well adjusted lives.

In Search of the Permanent

By ALEXANDER A. STEINBACH

Place a seed next to a rock and the contrast is amazing. The great rock dwarfs the seed in size, in weight, and in sheer elemental power. The rock has kept a rendezvous with ages that have watched the pageantry of time and events pass by. The seed, is still in its infancy, having fallen from the parent bough that gave it birth. To consider them comparable on the basis of sense perceptions would seem utter folly. The solid rock juts out like a giant, the very acme of stability and permanency. The seed is so fragile, so delicate, so tender; it can easily be crushed between the fingers of a child.

The Seed That Conquers the Rock

But pit the frail seed against the massive boulder and see what happens. The contest between them develops into a prodigious battle behind the closed doors of a great silence. As the struggle commences, it seems inevitable that the rock must crush the seed. What chance has this midget David against that colossal Goliath?

And yet, if one were to observe the contest over a period of years, one would witness the incredible and miraculous victory of seed over rock. The height-hungry tendrils of the seed, invisible to the human eye, probe unceasingly and relentlessly along the surface and sides of the rock. Patiently, perseveringly, like a surging army searching for a weakness in the enemy's position, the seed seeks a vulnerable spot and then launches an offensive that cannot be checked. Urged on by the mystery of life imprisoned within it, the seed sends its roots like patrols into every crevice, and, once it gains a foothold, the result of the contest can no longer be in doubt. The germinative vitality of the seed, reinforced by superb phalanxes of sun and wind and dew, is no match for the helpless inanimate boulder. Its roots claw at the granite ledge and carve their living autograph in the rock against which primeval hurri-

canes and icy tempests had hurled their legions in vain. Silently, noiselessly, it extends its life-germ into every aperture, into every cleft and rift, until its bridgehead is firmly established.

Years pass. Springs, summers, autumns and winters glide by upon the tracks of Time. The rootlets expand like cables and spread deeper and ever deeper through the slowly yielding flint. At long last a day comes when the infant seed matures into a tree, a living witness that no material obstacles can vie with the upthrust of the Universal Energy that bursts through all being. It splits asunder the rock that would obstruct its path and makes the disintegrated stone its caverned throne. The miracle is complete and the contest is ended. Precious life has been hewn out of barren rock. Seed has conquered granite. The law of vitality, flowing out of the endless river of God, has again triumphed. Nothing, nothing can challenge the power of its endurance.

Man's Effort to Free Himself From Bondage to Change

Here we have a parable of history, of life itself. Vitality alone is the stamp of permanency. It is the germ through which reality presses forward into fullness of realization. Size in itself is not necessarily a denial of the law of transiency. Bigness devoid of vitality is too narrow to endure. Smallness saturated with vitality contains the self-revelation of God, and is, therefore, a stepping-stone to permanency.

Indeed the whole history of the human race is characterized by a feverish quest to differentiate between the permanent and the transient. From his early infancy man felt a deep need to transfer his allegiance from ephemeral to durable values. He yearned for a light that would remain constant when all else failed him. He was quick to discover that all things within the ken of his personal experience paid homage to an inexorable law called Change. Nothing seemed fixed. His own cycle of existence—birth, infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, old age and death; the divisions of time—past, present and future; the rotation of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter; the span of his crops—plowing, sowing and reaping; the ebb and flow of the tides; the rising and setting of the sun and the waxing and waning of the moon—all were governed by the implacable law of change. They presented a constantly shifting view of life and of the world. They were an inescapable reminder of the inconstancy of phenomena perceived through the senses.

It is therefore not at all surprising that man became obsessed with a yearning to discover, or to create if necessary, something immutable, something enduring within him and around him. His mind revolted against the tyranny of transiency. His spirit was haunted by intimations of infinitude. He quested for a loyalty that was binding alike upon all creation. Like the seed that split solid rock in its upleaping eagerness to become a tree, he must shatter the opaqueness of flesh in order to make room for the blossoming of the inner seed containing the germ of Eternity. At first it was no more than a vague, inchoate speculation peeping with timid eyes out of the dim depths of his yearning. For centuries it was a shapeless, agitated upsurging astir in the dark abyss of the unconscious. But as it moved across the threshold of consciousness, it struggled to be released. It mounted to a longing that could not be withstood. It was like a burning bush that would not be consumed. Something within man, impelled by the same vitality that enabled the fragile seed to master the rock, beat violently against the surrounding vastness that hemmed him in. The vastness still awed him, but it was no longer adequate

for the geography of his spirit. He must leap beyond the seen into the realm of the unseen. He must find a way to explore regions beyond the immensities of time and space, beyond the suns and stars, and beyond the fathomless heights and depths that contained them. Somewhere there must be a something that is permanent. Somewhere there must be a Someone who is unchangeable. Somewhere there must be an answer for deep calling unto Deep and height calling unto Height.

Thus man, desperately needing an answer to his inner cry, discovered his kinship with God. When the hunger for fulfillment became too fierce to be borne, he sank to his knees and exclaimed in worshipful reverence, "God, O God, Thou are my God." With these words his disquieted spirit grew tranquil. His inner being was drained of its savage torment. He had wrested a victory out of a world of transiency. He now knew that life's vicissitudes could never conquer him. By fusing his finite spirit with God's Infinite Spirit he could draw the mantle of Divinity around him and feel himself a coworker in God's creative drama. His search for the permanent was now satisfied. His life had duplicated the miracle of seed conquering rock. The seed of his spiritual longing became a full grown tree of spiritual realization.

The Quest for Preserving the Body and Saving the Soul

The Egyptians were perhaps the first to translate this experience into a definite technique. They strove to identify the idea of permanency with the human body, and out of their groping grew the amazing art of embalming. Death must be restrained from gaining dominion over man's corporeal temple. Its votive flame must not become a mockery of cold ashes. Thus embalming became their instrument against the tyranny of change, and they employed it with such extraordinary skill that mummies were preserved for centuries in an incredible state of freshness. This was perhaps the first systematic effort to achieve imperishability. It is irrelevant that they failed to realize the folly of attempting to invest with permanence an organism from which all vitality had been drained. The fact is significant that the quest for permanency became a challenge to them, an urgent upreaching to which they had to give expression.

As the human mind grew sufficiently disciplined to concentrate on abstractions, the search for permanency shifted from the concept of an embalmed body to the concept of an immortal soul. The idea that life is a dualism, the belief that man is a composite of body and spirit, and the need to believe in a doctrine of life and a world beyond this life and this world furnished a natural and logical stepping stone for the transfer of the concept of changelessness from body to soul. Accordingly, most religions committed their devotees to the principle of a soul that is the portrait of Divinity, an immortal guest tenanting the body so long as it retains its vitality, a permanent, unchanging essence that is coextensive with Eternity. This principle became a sublime fruitage of the human mind and heart. It proclaimed that, immeasurable fathoms below the conscious life, steeped into the deepest abysses of the drama of living, there is an undertow that causes Life to flow into an everlasting current that has its source in God. Though all else in the universe be subject to transitoriness, here was a phenomenon that transcended change. As the seed conquered the rock, so must the soul shatter the yoke of death. This was the seed that retained its vitality when the bodied rock returned to the dust from which it had emerged.

What great comfort this idea has

brought not only to those who wrestled with it in the olden days but also to us in the modern world! Those who first conceived it are truly great benefactors of the race. They haloed life with a deeper meaning. They poured the iridescence of hope into a dream that not only conquered the tomb, but also enabled man to gaze toward the high peaks of Eternity. Wedded to this dream, man became the inheritor of another world, a deathless kingdom of which the soul was the permanent plenipotentiary. Now he was invincible. Even the sharp lance of time was impotent against his armor. Wordsworth fashioned wings for this idea in his majestic lines:

"But he who would force the Soul,
tilts with a straw
Against a Champion cased in
adamant."

Progress a Function of Man's Quest for Permanence

The hunger to link our brief existence with a higher loyalty has companioned the human race to this very day. It has evoked within us an intellectual and a spiritual venturesomeness whose tremendous potency we seldom stop to analyze. We speak of the infinite in time and space as though infinity and we are threads in the same cosmic tapestry. We measure the distance from pole to pole, from earth to the farthest star. We weigh the sun and saddle its heat and light for our daily use. We proceed to master nature and formulate a blueprint for the future. We idealize the past and make it live again through the romance of the written word. We construct mammoth telescopes to spy on the privacy of invisible galaxies of stars, and with our insistent gaze we rout satellites from haunts that have not been disturbed since time began.

All this, of course, is categorized as progress. We explain it as a search for knowledge. But it goes deeper than that. It is the irrepressible longing in man to gain mastery over things that outlive him. By discovering secrets hitherto unknown, and by bequeathing them to generations yet unborn, he projects himself into the future and thus abrogates the transiency of his mortal estate. He thereby feels that he is more than clay. Flame-hued, his mind kindles a fire that will continue to leap with blazing tongues even into the firmament of the future. In other words, he strives to achieve for the mind the permanency the Egyptians strove to attain for the body.

An incident in the life of von Humboldt, the great scientist, demonstrates the nature of this striving. When he was almost a century old he cried out, "Oh, for another one hundred years!" He was referring to a new truth upon whose threshold he had lately advanced. But who will doubt that he would have reiterated this cry after the passage of a second century of living. He was genuinely eager to bequeath new discoveries to humankind. But it was also his bid for permanency. He was calling for more time to entrench himself more firmly in the future and thus debilitate the transiency of the present.

Final Goal—Permanent Worth

In the final analysis, however, man's perennial search for the permanent is a quest for abiding worth. He presses on for a worthfulness that will not dissolve at the impact of reality. He experiences the bitterness of repeated failure and frustration, but he refuses to be vanquished by them. One by one he discards the illusory goals that sparkled like gold but proved to be dross. With starlight in his eyes he scans the heightward road and follows it until the footprints of the Divine appear within the focus of his vision. Unmindful of the throes he must bear, he journeys along the highway

of his dream until seeking becomes realization and yearning becomes fulfillment. No one need announce that he has become wedded to permanent worth. The sudden illumination in his soul affirms it to his whole enamored being.

From that moment the heart sings a new psalm. Life splinters its chains of mortality and soars to new frontiers of Life Eternal. The soul grows into Over-Soul and worth into Over-Worth. Consciousness grows into Thought. Mind grows into Truth and heart into Love. An overpowering sense of life's divineness proclaims its permanent worth. No longer is it merely a sum of fragments known as years, but an indestructible link in the far-engirdling existence of the All. The spirit, having found its permanent mate, shares the immortal pulse that beats out of the Great Heart of God. It bursts into a triumphant refrain, for it has become aware of the imperishable vitality through which it

"Can crowd eternity into an hour,
Or stretch an hour into eternity."

How to Make Hebrew Study Relevant

By HARRY ELKIN

IN the recurrent controversy on the subject of Hebrew in the curriculum, two factors are outstanding. First, even those who oppose the intensive study of Hebrew, because of linguistic problems and other difficulties, favor some kind of instruction in the language. (For those who would eliminate Hebrew entirely, there is no problem.) Secondly, those who maintain vehemently the need for maximum study in the language frankly admit that the "tragedy of Jewish education is the lack of a favorable environment."* This applies particularly to the study of Hebrew. Insofar as the substance of study is concerned, there is general agreement in both groups that the Bible, the prayers, and the terms associated with the holidays and Jewish concepts should form the basic subject matter in any Hebrew curriculum—if obstacles to the mastery of them by the student can be overcome. In fact, these do now constitute the main subects of study in most schools that devote any time at all to the study of the language.

The Need to Make Hebrew Relevant

Basically, then, the real problem of Hebrew instruction is not hours, methods, subjects or approach. The difficulties they present can be overcome in time, if the root difficulty can be met, namely *the lack of continuity and the complete absence of a natural environment for the acquisition and later for the application of knowledge by the student,* as pointed out by Professor Scharfstein.* Scharfstein's remedy, however, to increase the number of years of study to compensate for the lack of a desirable environment both inside and outside the home, does not entirely meet the issue.

Take, for example, the student who has completed a full six-year course and more in Hebrew, especially in the average communities where there are no organized devotees of the culture. What opportunities for using his knowledge of Hebrew present themselves to the student? What

* *Hadoar,* April 16, 1943.

carry-over is there in his day,-to-day existence? The failure to find any *raison d'etre* for Hebrew today reaches down into all groups, even into the ranks of Zionists and synagogue Jews, who have some appreciation of the distinctive cultural and traditional values which Hebrew had for the Jewish people in the past. Most of these Jews know well that the mass of Hebrew knowledge fed to their children during years of study is quickly consumed and, like the blasted ears of corn and the lean cows of Pharoh's dream, it cannot be noticed that they consumed anything. That explains the constant cry of parents for Yiddish, which to them is an on-the-spot language to be used *today* in the home and, yes, even "to write to grandma."

The tragedy of the students is even greater. They recall the many years of work and devotion and the final mastery of the language of the Bible and the prayer book, and then comes the ultimate sad awareness, a year or two following graduation, that their knowledge is not *kesef over lasoher* (current coin). They have amassed knowledge that is not current with the people. Their attainments are not valued nor even recognized. Opportunities for the use of this knowledge, even in a purely cultural and spiritual way, rarely present themeslves. And, above all, time has wrought havoc with their remembrance of Hebrew learning. Alas, the mass of Hebraic skills which they acquired with such patience and sacrifice has become obsolete—a cruel word to use, but true. There comes to mind, at this point, something said by a very bright 14-year-old girl who was graduated from a six-year Hebrew School course, and was sufficiently interested to continue in the high school department. "I like my Hebrew study very much," she said, "but where does it get me?" Even the joy these students would derive from recognizing a Hebrew phrase in the rabbi's sermon or following a prayer in the original text is also fast disappearing, since translations are furnished immediately.

The arguments presented in our journals and writings that Hebrew is the basis of our culture and tradition, without which these are threatened with extinction, *do not at all influence the mind of the average Jew or of the student.* Some more compelling and cogent reasons will have to be found to convince them that our demands for Hebrew are justified. These reasons will have to spring from the immediate environment of the students and of their parents. In other words, if we are able to convince Jewish children, and their parents, that the study of Hebrew is relevant and essential to ordinary Jewish living (not to becoming a rabbi—"my son doesn't want to be a rabbi"), then our battle for the preservation of Hebrew and even for its development, will be made easier.

The problem of making Jewish education relevant is a very important one and constantly engages the attention of educators. However, the achievement of relevancy in certain subjects of the curriculum is more easily attained than in others. For example, it is not difficult to make the study of Jewish customs and ceremonies significant to the pupil. Jewish history presents many opportunities for relating the study to the experience and knowledge of the Jewish child. Parents and children are quick to see the immediacy of these studies. But in the realm of Hebrew we encounter the greatest difficulties. Whereas the worthwhileness and pointedness of a knowledge of Jewish history, customs and ethical concepts will, from time to time, make themselves felt in the life of the student, both in his youth and in his adulthood, the value of Hebrew will not. Even educators themselves are sorely pressed when the need arises for them to convince parents and lay leaders of the urgency and signifi-

cance of language study in the curriculum.

We must, therefore, set to work to find ways and means of making the study of Hebrew more relevant. And our approach will have to be very radical, even to the point of artificiality, if we are to assure the language a place in the school. To make the study of history or Jewish customs, for example, more pertinent to the American child's environment, we merely had to change the content or method of instruction, or both, but to bring about a greater relevancy for Hebrew *neither a change of subject nor of method would appreciably affect the situation.* Here, *the very environment of the Jewish child will have to be reconstructed,* if we mean to accomplish our purpose. In other words, we shall have to *produce and create circumstances, yes, even artificially at first, for the utilization of the Hebrew student's learning experiences,* if we are to make him and his parents feel that the study of Hebrew is an essential part of the environment of the American Jewish child.

Utilizing the Synagogue to Make Hebrew Relevant

How are we to go about reshaping the environment? The approach is simple: *we shall have to exploit every possibility of the one institution in Jewish life that employs Hebrew to any degree at all—the synagogue.* It should be pointed out again that, at the present time, a graduate of a school offering a full Hebrew course finds very little opportunity for the exercise of his knowledge, not only at home and outside the home, but even in the synagogue, where most of the prayers are beyond his grasp both linguistically and conceptually. (The plan to activize the graduate's Hebraic ability by supplying him with easy and readable literature is one that would reach only a very small percentage of the school-going population. The average student, immediately upon entering the public high school, and we are dealing with that age-group, becomes completely absorbed in his work, and there are few studies, if any, that can compete effectively for his time or interest.) The fact is that we have failed to discover opportunities for utilizing the Hebrew knowledge of students in the institution which is most naturally and most easily equipped for such a task. The unnecessarily wide gap that exists between the formal study and the life situation must be quickly bridged. We must search every corner of Jewish tradition and synagogue ritual for possibilities of tying up the Hebrew studies with the pupil's experience.

In order not to leave this discussion an abstract and argumentative one, I shall list a few areas of Jewish living where such a program can be initiated without undue artificiality or difficulty.

1) *The Bar-Mitzvah Ceremony.* There was a time in European Jewish life when the Bar-Mitzvah ceremony was the occasion for a boy to present a talmudic discussion in which he showed the progress he had made in his studies. We should adopt a modified version of that practice. In place of the ridiculous vogue of Bar-Mitzvah speeches, which obtained until recently and probably still prevails in many synagogues, we must set up a new vogue. It should become a tradition for the Bar-Mitzvah, and, for that matter for the Bat-Mitzvah, or the girl Confirmant, to recite and explain Hebrew passages, from the Bible or other sources, which the child has come upon during the course of his or her study. This would be more effective than the custom followed in many congregational schools of merely requiring a certain attendance record prior to Confirmation. A required attendance period *plus* the recitation of previously studied portions, not mere memory selections served up by the rabbi or prin-

cipal, would be a decided improvement on the current procedure.

Furthermore, there should be a complete change in the chanting of the Bar-Mitzvah *haftarah*. No point is served and nothing attained in having thousands of boys, year in and year out, chant selections from the Prophets which, in most cases, are not only difficult linguistically for an advanced Hebrew student, but even beyond comprehension in translation. Instead, there should be collected and arranged a series of less difficult or, if necessary, simplified, prophetic portions which can be studied by the Bar-Mitzvah as a lesson both in Hebraic ideals and literature, and at the same time as preparation for his synagogue ceremony. Where original chapters are revised, the notes of the cantillation can easily be supplied if desired. It borders somewhat on the ridiculous to have children study for months *haftarot* such as that for Bamidbar (*Hosea,* Chapter 2), and others that are either obscure or unimportant, at a time when these youngsters could get to know some of the really beautiful selections, which can be made intelligible to them both in respect to language and content.

If, in addition to this, we add the requirement that the Bar-Mitzvah should recite and perhaps explain one of the passages of the *sidrah* of the week, the most significant one for a youngster, then we have established some connection with the Hebrew school class. Then the boy studying *humash* knows that some day, when he is Bar-Mitzvah, he will have the opportunity of putting his knowledge to full use before his friends and relatives. He will actually be given the chance to see years of study brought to fruition. His experience with the Hebrew language will not be confined to the hours spent at mastering vocabulary and idiom in the classroom and then be abruptly discontinued and forgotten.

The follow-up should not terminate with the day of confirmation. On Sabbaths when there is no Bar-Mitzvah the rabbi, or whoever is in charge of the services, should call back periodically those beyond the age of Confirmation, and prepare them for the recitation and explanation of suitable current *sidrah* passages and *haftarot,* and not merely for the chanting of these portions. Thus, young people will be enabled to keep their Hebrew knowledge *active* and will see a real tie-up between their school work and Jewish life.

This participation of the young people should be at the Friday evening service and not at the Saturday morning service which usually are poorly attended. The argument may be advanced that we should not tamper too much with Synagogue procedures, especially with such a matter as the arrangement of *haftarot* which are supposed to be geared to the content of the *sidrot*. There is only one answer to this: the synagogue must arrange the ritual to meet the urgent needs of its people. Many alert rabbis have already set up this principle as a basis for revision and innovation. As for the matter of *haftarah* sequence, few Jews are aware of the connection between *sidrah* and *haftarah,* unless the rabbi points it out; and, under the plan proposed, there is nothing to stop him from continuing to discuss in his sermon the traditional sequence and the reasons for it.

2) *The Kaddish.* We must recognize that the *Kaddish* recital is a potent force in bringing many Jewish people to identify themslves in some way with Jewish living. We might as well exploit that fact. Here then is another opportunity to implement the Hebrew student's knowledge of the past and the present, so that, if and when he is called upon to recite the *Kaddish* or respond to it, he can bring his Hebrew into play. The *Kaddish* should be rewritten in simple

but effective Hebrew. Then the student will realize that the Hebrew he studies, or has studied, is an instrument for *expression and not a past-time for scholars.* As the situation stands now, the boy who has completed five years of Hebrew is in little better position to find his special knowledge any more useful than one who has attended two years. There should be no hesitancy about translating the Kaddish from the original Aramaic since it was written in that language because that was the vernacular of the people.

3) *Holiday Services.* Students of Hebrew should be called upon to present responsive readings or dramatizations in easy Hebrew, which deal with significant events connected with the particular holiday. Each of the festivals, both major and minor, is replete with material for such purposes. Since few, if any, congregational schools or even talmud torahs present Hebrew dramas at their celebrations, this procedure would be an excellent way to channelize into the real life situation of the pupil the Hebraic studies related to each holiday.

4) *Hebrew Idioms and Expressive Phrases.* The "vocabulary of Jewish life" both in the home and the synagogue always employed a large number of Hebrew words and expressions. We must utilize the idiom of the synagogue and the home, wherever possible, as a means of bringing to the child the realization that Hebrew is a *medium of expression* in many areas of Jewish living. And with this in mind we should begin to revise old idioms and introduce new ones. the old saying *yeyasher kohakha,* used considerably in the snagogue, might be changed into *hazak ve-ematz,* a phrase that means something to a Hebrew school student who has studied the Bible. *Gut yom tov* becomes *hag sameah.* The traditional *baruch sheppetarani* might be revised into something more within the grasp of the child and his parent. The point is that we must explore the learning experiences of the student and attempt to carry these over into the environment he will live in as a Jew.

Objections Answered

The above few suggestions merely indicate the nature of the task, which is one of innovation and creation. Two charges may be leveled against the procedures they imply—that of artificiality and that of oversimplification. As to the former shortcoming, we can only say that, when a patient is in danger of dying, one must resort to all possible means of rescue, even artificial methods. And no one will deny that Hebrew, as a subject of instruction in the Jewish school, is in just such danger. Furthermore, we must bear in mind, that the artificial often becomes, in the course of time, the natural. Many customs and usages are unnatural and forced at the outset, but, in the course of years, gain acceptance. Even within our own short experience the innovations of yesterday have become the common practices of today. To mention but a few, there are the late Friday evening service, the use of Hebrew in Palestine, the *Oneg Shabbat,* etc.

As to the second possible charge, that of oversimplification, it should be remembered that profundity and difficulty in expression never have captured the imagination of a people, at least not of the American people. Rather the simple direct word and the easily caught phrase leave a mark on the mind of the average person, as is abundantly shown by the slogans that live in the hearts of Americans, "government of the people, for the people, and by the people," "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," "give me liberty or give me death." Likewise in the realm of Jewish experience, it is the facile phrase which has gained currency

among the majority of Jews. Most Jews, can fluently quote such phrases as *"Shema Yisrael," "Barukh dayan emet," "Tzedakah tatzil mimmavet," "Hatan kala mazal tov."* Thus, the simplification of Jewish expressions would prove an asset in this effort to achieve a greater relevancy for Hebrew.

The real difficulty will lie in the actual task of creating the new forms and the opportunities for their utilization. This will call for unusual boldness and resourcefulness. To proceed along the beaten paths will fail to assure Hebrew a place in the curriculum, for already there are indications that this subject is being relegated to a secondary position in the Jewish school.

Book Notes

RAB SAADIA GAON, edited by Louis Finkelstein. Jewish Theological Seminary, 1944.

THIS splendid book preserves the ceremonies and speeches held under the sponsorship of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in commemoration of the life and works of Rab Saadia Gaon (882-942). The speeches and articles are by members of the Seminary faculty, with the exception of two addresses by Professors Richard P. McKeon and Arthur H. Compton of the University of Chicago. This celebration was an excellent way of publicizing to the scholarly world the name and work of the medieval Jewish savant. Indirectly, too, the essays reflect the state of mind of present day Jewish religious intellectuals of the Conservative school. They stress Saadia's modernism, and infer the possibility and validity of combining scientific knowledge with the traditional piety and beliefs of Israel.

This Seminary volume is one of a great many collections of specialized studies on Saadia occasioned by the thousandth anniversary of his death. Among them are the *Jewish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 33, Nos. 2 and 3; the Saadia Volume by the American Academy for Jewish Research; *Saadia Studies,* Manchester, edited by I. J. Rosenthal; *Rab Saadia Gaon,* Jerusalem, edited by Rabbi J. L. Fishman; *Bitzaron,* New York, Vol. 6, No. 10; and *Hadoar,* New York, Vol. 22, No. 27. These are evidence of the vigor and value of contemporary Jewish scholarship, and of the capital importance of the Gaon's life and work.

Only the bare facts about Saadia's personal life have reached us. We know more about his public affairs. Besides the biographical information, the Seminary volume under review seems to deal largely with these three principal fields.

1. Saadia's controversies with free-thinkers, dissenters and Karaites, and his troubles with Ben Meir and with the exilarch David Ben Zakkai. It appears that, although religious issues were at stake, the factor of "Jewish politics," of personal rivalry and desire for power played a part in these quarrels.

2. His approach to the problem of the conflict between his talmudic and pious heritage and his secular culture. He had to reconcile the Bible with rational thought. This involved many adjustments and innovations along the entire line of his scholarly activity.

3. The organized and integrated thought-system of Saadia. Here I should

like to point out the importance placed by modern scholars upon the epistemology of Saadia, because of his being the first Jewish philosopher and because of the intrinsic value of his theory of knowledge. For example, the Jewish Quarterly Review has three studies on this aspect of his philosophy: Saadia's Theory of Knowledge, by Israel Efros; the Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes and St. Thomas and its origin in Aristotle and the Stoics by A. Heschel; and the Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy, by Harry A. Wolfson. Saadia's topical method of theological writing is worthy of mention. Although 1,000 years separate him from Philo, he is apparently the first Jew after Philo to come forward with expositions and analyses of Scriptures, of Jewish beliefs and institutions. He introduced the topical study of our theology, doctrine by doctrine, first conceiving Judaism as a system of beliefs and then proceeding to the examination of each one as part of a well laid-out pattern.

In studying Saadia, it is important to realize the major role he played in the history of Jewish ideas. In him, we find definitive Jewish thought crystallized. This is true of his theology, his *halakah* and ritual. Such crystallization could come overnight, and then again it need not. It could be the result of a long process. The gaonic period succeeded the talmudic era. The talmud is not a well articulated source of Jewish thought and practice. *Halakah* and *aggadah* are mingle in it. The real and patently unreal exist side by side. Divergent and even contradictory views are given, so that many matters appear to be in a fluid, unsettled condition. The Geonim who succeeded the Amoraim as teachers and authorities had a difficult job on their hands, to continue to interpret Jewish thought and enforce Jewish law in their generations. A volume on Saadia, the greatest of the Geonim, should indicate the line of progression from the Talmud to Saadia, in what ways he retained Talmudic lore and in what ways he moved forward. For it should be remembered that, after the Talmudic authorities, Saadia became the pivotal figure in the history of tradition. He became source and standard-bearer for the legalists and theologians of subsequent centuries.

The six chapters of the book are preceded by a brilliantly written foreword by Prof. Louis Finkelstein. He sums up the scholarly labors and direction of the Gaon under the term integration,—integration of the Gaon's inherited faith with his contemporary social order made complex by Greco-Arabic scientific knowledge. A large part of Prof. Finkelstein's essay is devoted to an analysis of the Gaon's two principal original prayers. In these the writer traces the ideas and language of Greek philosophy alongside the prayerful utterances of a pious Jew. One may raise the question as to the success achieved by the method of integration. Integration has been a familiar and recognized practice of Jewish theologians. It has always been in use. Mordecai Kaplan's "Judaism As a Civilization" is a notable contemporary example of this procedure. Maimonides was the most prominent harmonizer in Jewish history. But he had his bitter attackers. Saadia too had enemies in his lifetime and long after he passed away.

Prof. Marx presents a valuable sketch of Saadia's personal life and public career. Dr. A. Halkin's subject, "Exegesis and Polemics," is splendidly covered in a clear and substantial statement of the Gaon's rational method as Bible commentator. Another summary is that of Saadia's theology under thirteen headings by Dr. Bokser. The closing chapter, "Saadia in the Light of Today," is by Robert Gordis. There is a bibliography

by Boaz Cohen, from which is missing the study of Saadia's eschatology in Dr. Joseph Sarachek's book, "The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature."

All the essays are stimulating, and beautifully written and paint a clear picture of the Gaon's mind and of his tasks and achievements. The book reflects honor on the Seminary and on its President and guiding spirit, Prof. Louis Finkelstein. JOSEPH SARACHEK

CORRESPONDENCE

A Correction

Sirs:

Your statement that "Dan the Watchman," recently produced in Palestine, is "the first Hebrew opera" (THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, March 23, 1945, page 8) is incorrect.

"Hechalutz" was composed by me two decades ago (1924), in Jerusalem. In 1926 the score with its original Hebrew text was entered in the International music contest in Philadelphia, at the Sesquicentennial Exposition. It was awarded first prize (by an entirely non-Jewish jury) and subsequently published (1931). The fact of its being the first Hebrew opera has never been challenged, to my knowledge.

Performances took place in Palestine, America and Europe. Other performances are now being scheduled for next season in New York, Newark and Philadelphia.

JACOB WEINBERG

Thank you, Dr. Weinberg, for calling attention to our mistake.—EDITORS.

Some Suggestions for Advancing Reconstructionism

Sirs:

Here are my suggestions for improving the Reconstructionist organization:

1. Plans should be formulated for converting *The Reconstructionist* into a weekly. Through this step the magazine is likely to become the central mouthpiece of American Jewry.

2. The "Reconstructionist News" should immediately become a part of the magazine. Reconstructionism is not a philosophy for highbrows. It is a movement, and its progress should be reported widely and regularly.

3. Most important of all: a commission should be appointed immediately to draw up a code of daily practice for the American Jew. The present confusion regarding the nature of Jewish living must be dispelled without delay. Unless this is done I don't see how anything can save American Jewry.

S. FELIX MENDELSOHN
Rabbi, Temple Beth Israel, Chicago, Ill.

The above suggestions have received our earnest consideration. We should like to convert *The Reconstructionist* into a weekly but we lack the necessary resources. As to the second suggestion, we think it ill-advised. Many of our readers are not Reconstructionists and are not interested in news of our movement. The combining of a "house organ" with a magazine of opinion is rarely successful. As for the third suggestion, it cannot be achieved through precipitate action. We have made a contribution to the purpose it expresses in our articles, subsequently published as a pamphlet, "Toward a Guide for Jewish Ritual Usage," and we intend similarly to evaluate other areas of Jewish usage not covered by that pamphlet. But, above all, we expect to make a contribution to the desired end through our Reconstructionist Fellowship, as soon as it gathers more strength. It is as yet very young.

—THE EDITORS

REALITIES AND VALUES

(Continued from page 8)

the Jewries of other nations. The Anglo-Jewish Association has a similar philosophy of Jewish life. We wonder, therefore, what common interests they want to discuss. Will the subjects be purely ritualistic, ecclesiastical and theological? Or will they concern themselves with the interests of Jews as people bound by a common fate no less than by a common faith. But if they concede the common secular interests of the Jewish people as an identifiable historic entity, why do they deny that entity the right to determine its own interests? Why are they unwilling to submit decisions affecting the people as a whole to determination by a vote of democratically elected representatives? Why, in a word, will not the American Jewish Committee be bound by decisons of American Jewish Conference?